

HB 2132 with HCA 1 -- CIVICS EDUCATION INITIATIVE

SPONSOR: LaFaver

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with Amendments" by the Standing Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education by a vote of 13 to 0.

A student of a college or university, who, after earning a passing grade in a course of instruction for United States or Missouri history or constitution, transfers to another college or university, is not required to earn a passing grade in another such course as a condition precedent to graduation.

The bill repeals the prohibition on students receiving a certificate of graduation without having satisfactorily passed an examination on the provisions and principles of the United States and Missouri constitutions, American history, and American institutions. However, to receive a certificate of graduation, public or private schools other than private trade schools may require a passing score on an examination of the provisions and principles of the United States Constitution, Missouri Constitution, or both.

Any student entering ninth grade after July 1, 2017, who is attending a public, charter, or private school, except for private trade schools, or a student seeking to complete a high school equivalency certificate, must, as a condition of high school graduation or its equivalent, take and receive a passing grade on a basic civics test similar to the civics portion of the United States Naturalization test, produced by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

Each public school, charter school, or private school, except for private trade schools, and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education must certify that a student has taken and received a passing grade on the test.

Each district must adopt a policy permitting a student with a disability to receive a waiver from the basic civics test requirement if the student's IEP committee recommends it.

This bill is the same as HB 1646 and HB 1621(2016).

HCA #1: This amendment requires students receiving a certificate of graduation to pass an examination on the provisions and principles of the United States and Missouri constitutions, American history, American institutions, and American civics.

The amendment allows the school districts to administer the test on American civics in conjunction with testing on the provisions and principles of the United States and Missouri constitutions, American history, and American institutions; clarifies the requirement of 100 questions; allows school districts to use any online testing; and removes the certification requirement.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that every student should learn about American civics and that certain studies have shown the current student population lacks knowledge on American civics. Students should have a basic level of knowledge about American civics in order to participate in the political process.

Proponents voiced their favor and points of agreement in context of the bill's forthcoming amendment language.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Haahr; Connections Academy; Missouri Chamber of Commerce And Industry; and Missouri School Boards Association.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say students, teachers, and parents aren't gaining anything from the bill and are, perhaps, losing something due to the subjective nature of the target answers. We should take a more in depth look at the situation and give our students "something to chew at."

Testifying on the bill was Concerned Women For America of Missouri.